

Freemasonry

By Lucían Johnston

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TRUTH

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A PLAIN TALK WITH FREEMASONS

I HAVE always been convinced that the American Mason—that is the average one—has ever been somewhat kindly disposed to and rather puzzled by the official attitude of the Catholic Church towards his organization. Many a Catholic can cite instances where he has received courtesy and even help from members of the craft. Many, like myself, can note that some of our most intimate friends are Masons, gentlemen for whom we have the highest respect and even affection. I well recall, at a gathering of chiefly priests some years ago, a distinguished layman, ex-Mason and convert to the Church, earnestly maintained that, in his former Masonic experience, he had never noted any hostility towards Catholicism, and that, if the Church permitted, he would like to see his son become a Mason. So it runs.

It is the object of this writing to meet these well meaning Masons in a friendly talk and try to show them why the Church is justified in condemning their society in spite of their tolerance and frequent kindnesses towards her own members. And, after a careful study of this curious situation, I can just about sum it all up by saying that the average American Freemason does not really know what is real Masonry—the kind that is so irreconcilable with Catholicity. I say this not out of an assumption of innate superiority or with any desire to offend the susceptibilities of my masonic friends. But out of a real conviction that these latter do not read the official publications of their craft, are ignorant of or indifferent to its philosophical and moral teachings as laid down by its chief writers, and are equally ignorant of the history of Masonry, especially of foreign Masonry and of the connection between the latter and their own kind. And so, as a matter of friendly discussion, I ask them to read over the following few observations in the hope that at least they will better appreciate the attitude of the Catholic Church, an attitude which is not one of mere blind hatred, but of a reasonable rejection of what is essentially incompatible with her conception of

her divine mission. The following chapters will deal with only a few specific points. But these are the points that are most often in discussion. They will attempt to show that American Masonry has a closer connection with the openly atheistic Masonry of continental Europe than is generally supposed by the American brethren; that the philosophy and moral teaching of the accepted Masonic authorities are utterly unacceptable to a Catholic, and that the average American Mason is ignorant of such teaching and of the object of his order and is purposely kept ignorant. I ask my Masonic friends to read both sides impartially, as I have tried to do; hence, I premise a brief Bibliography.

MASONIC AUTHORITIES. The chief sources are of course the works of Albert Pike, acknowledged to be the greatest authority in all Masonic matters, and those of Albert G. Mackay. A more popular and recent writer is Albert Churchward ("Origin and Evolution of Freemasonry"). There is also a good article by a Mason in the British Encyclopedia.

CATHOLIC AUTHORITIES. An exhaustive study of Masonry by Arthur Preuss ("A Study in American Freemasonry"). An equally exhaustive study of same in the Catholic Encyclopedia (at word "Masonry"). Both of these studies are based upon a thorough reading of Masonic authorities (chiefly Pike and Mackey), and both quote these most extensively. A further Bibliography can be found in both the British and Catholic Encyclopedias.

A POINT OF HISTORY

A history of Freemasonry is obviously impossible in the present limits. But I wish to call the attention of Freemasons to a couple of historical aspects of it, which do bear upon their mental attitude.

The first is that Freemasonry is legitimately and accurately subject to the historical criticism of outsiders, the same as any other historical organization. Many Masons doubtless imagine that their secrecy entitles them alone to

an accurate grasp of the history of their craft. Their own historians now admit that this is an untenable position. (Ency. Britt., p. 78.) The historical conclusions of non-Masons are therefore just as worthy of credence as are those of Masons. History is history, no matter by whom written.

Secondly, the best Masonic historians admit that the history of Freemasonry has been very uncritically written up to about 1850 (Ib.). Mackey, for instance, speaking of this early period, says "It is the opprobrium of Freemasonry that its history has never yet been written in a spirit of critical truth; that credulity has been the foundation on which all Masonic historical investigations have been built." (Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, 296.) This being so, a Freemason should at least be cautious in accepting the statements of earlier Masonic historians, such as the Rev. James Anderson; all the more so as it is precisely these earlier writers who make the most extravagant claims for the legendary antiquity of their order.

Lastly and specifically as regards that antiquity. As far as I can make out, the latter and more critical Masonic authorities do not trace the history of Masonry even in its dimmest outlines further back than the Mason Guilds of the Middle Ages; regarding the legends about the Temple of Solomon and all such as pure imagination. (British Ency., 78.) All historians agree that the Freemasonry, as we now have it, dates back no further than the foundations of the Grand Lodge of England, June 24, 1717.

Non-Masonic, or, at least, Catholic historians, make a distinction as to the spirit and the concrete form of Freemasonry. They will admit it to be possible, though by no means proved, that this Grand Lodge was formed by the members of some few actual guilds of Masons which had some real historic connection with the same guilds in the Middle Ages, and that quite possibly many of the usages and customs and rites of initiation of the Medieval Guilds of Masons has thus passed over into present Freemasonry.

All quite possible; though, it should be remembered, that the whole structure of the Medieval Guild system collapsed with the Sixteenth Century Reformation, and that if any guilds did survive the wreckage, they were only convivial societies.

Granting all this, it is, however, too great a demand upon historic imagination to see any further connection between modern Freemasonry and a Medieval Guild of Masons. The spirit of the two is essentially antagonistic. The Medieval Guild was merely a society of laborers in stone, all of whom were thoroughly and zealously Catholic. Modern Freemasonry (leaving aside the utter absence of any labor element) is certainly not Catholic, by its own admission. Its objects are the teaching of what it considers truth and morality, utterly irrespective of what Catholicity holds. It is a speculative society in its essence, holding a philosophy of its own, and so on. Therefore, it is hopelessly different in spirit, aim, philosophic and religious belief or unbelief from a Catholic labor-guild of the Middle Ages. Any Protestant could just as well say that his church is an historic descendant of the Medieval Catholic Church, merely because his ancestors belonged to the Catholic Church and because to-day he yet retains some of the usages and vestments and buildings of that Medieval Church.

All this is to the point, as follows. It is meant to correct that impression prevailing among many Freemasons that the Catholic Church in condemning Freemasonry is condemning an institution which she once favored and largely created. They, therefore, are puzzled at such apparent inconsistency and hope that she will perhaps come back to her old love. As you see, she is not inconsistent, simply because modern Freemasonry is utterly and hopelessly different in spirit from Medieval Guild Masonry, even if we admit (for the sake of argument) some sort of connection in physical structure. In the eyes of the Church modern Freemasonry is something entirely new, utterly different from guild masonry. Nor do I think this position of hers is disputed by any modern Masonic historians.

II

HOW MUCH DO MASONS REALLY KNOW OF MASONRY?

With all due respect, I say that they know very little. I had suspected this from my own observations of my Masonic friends, who certainly did not impress me as being acquainted even superficially with either the history or real aims of their craft. But being an outsider, I restrained my suspicions on the assumption that perhaps, for reasons of secrecy, they did not display what knowledge they had. But, unfortunately, I find from a perusal of Masonic writers that my suspicion was correct. These writers almost unanimously state that *the average Mason is ignorant of the real aim and meaning of Masonry*. And, what is yet more amazing, the very highest and most accepted Masonic authorities assert that *the majority of Masons are deliberately and purposely kept in ignorance of the inner secrets of Masonry*. Mackey, for instance, in his "Symbolism of Freemasonry" and "Encyclopedia" repeatedly censures those (the majority in his day) Masons who saw in it nothing more than a social and charitable institution, referring contemptuously to them as "Members of the Knife and Fork Degree." No less a supreme authority than Pike himself admits the same. He says: "The Masonry of the higher degree teaches the great truths of intellectual science; but as to these, even as to the rudiments and first principles, Blue Masonry is absolutely dumb." Oliver (Theocratic Philosophy) declares: "Brethren, high in rank and office, are often unacquainted with the elementary principles of the science" (i. e. Masonry); again, Masons "may be fifty years Masters of the Chair and yet not learn the secret of the Brotherhood." (Quoted by Cath. Ency., p. 780.) And so on and on. From innumerable admissions of their own standard writers it is clear that the average Mason is densely ignorant of his own Masonry. Also note that even the high Masons are "often unacquainted with the elementary principles" of their organizations.

The amazing thing about this ignorance among the great mass of Masons is that they are deliberately kept in ignorance by those higher up. The idea underlying this action is that Masons should learn the secret of Masonry by degrees, if they ever completely learn it, which is doubtful. The historic precedent appealed to refers to the example of that Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, whose disciples were divided into two classes — exoteric and esoteric — the former attending the public assemblies of the sage, the latter being his real and intimate associates. Also reference is made to the well known “Disciplina Arcana” of the early Christians, according to which converts were admitted to the sacred mysteries by slow degrees because of the fear of pagan spies ever ready to denounce the Christians to the authorities.

Whatever the historic reference and whatever its justification may be, the fact remains admitted by the highest Masonic authorities that the average Mason is deliberately kept in ignorance of the real secret of Masonry, even so far as to make him believe he knows it when actually he does not know it. Pike, for instance, says apropos: “The Blue Degrees are but the outer court or portico of the temple. Part of the symbols are displayed there to the initiate; but he is *intentionally misled* by false interpretations. It is not intended that he shall understand them; but it is intended that he shall imagine he understands them. Their true explication is reserved for the Adepts, the Princes of Masonry.” (Morals and Dogma, p. 819, quoted by Preuss, p. 12.) Yet again Pike (Ib.) says: “Masonry * * * conceals its secrets from all except the Adepts and Sages, or the Elect, and uses false explanations and misinterpretations of its symbols to mislead those who deserve only to be misled.” That this concealment refers to Masons themselves and not to outsiders is apparent from other utterances of Pike. Thus: “Part of the Symbols are displayed * * * to the Initiated, but he is *intentionally misled* by false interpretations.” (Quoted by Cath. Ency., 779.)

Such admissions of intentional deception are so numerous as to be commonplace. Now, I am not discussing the

propriety of such deception. I merely note a fact, namely, that the very highest Masonic writers do admit that deception of Masons is intentionally and deliberately practiced. In view, therefore, of this fact, how can the average Freemason be at all sure that he really knows what is real Freemasonry? And, in view of Mackey's complaint of the general ignorance of Masons in his day, how can anyone have a reasonable certainty that the average Mason even bothers his head to inquire about real Masonry? Surely we must credit both Mackey and Pike with telling the truth. And, so, I feel compelled to retain my old impression that the average Mason really knows little, if anything, of real Masonry.

And, right here, I think, lies one of the main, if not the main reason why so many Masons fail to understand the opposition of the Church to their organization. They are good-natured fellows, looking at and seeing only the social and charitable aspects of Masonry, and hence cannot see the reason for the hostility of the Church to such an apparently beneficial society. But they would understand, even if they did not sympathize with that hostility, if they really knew, as the Catholic Church does know, the real meaning and ultimate aims of Freemasonry. What these aims are we will discuss in the succeeding chapter. Here I merely wish to emphasize this fact that, by the admission of their own standard writers, most Masons are ignorant of real Masonry and are intentionally kept ignorant. And, again, I repeat that this fact explains to a large extent why so many Masons fail to understand the opposition of the Church. I say this not in criticism or unfriendly rebuke, but as a plain fact.

III

THE REAL AIM OF FREEMASONRY

In reading the standard Masonic authorities, one is incessantly struck by their reiterated insistence that Freemasonry is far more than a social or charitable organization;

in fact that these two aspects of it are purely accidental and unessential. Quotations to that effect could be given in numberless quantity. I give just two. Mackey in his *Encyclopedia* (Preuss, p. 32) says that, while the outside world is ignorant, "the world within — the craft themselves — have been enlightened and instructed, and their views of Masonry (not as a social or charitable society, but as a philosophy, a science, a religion) have been elevated and enlarged." Again in his *Symbolism* he says: "Masons now thoroughly understand that often quoted definition that Masonry is a science of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols" (Preuss, p. 8). Also in his *Ritualist* he says that the mental illumination which comes to the newly initiated "is but another name for Divine Truth—the truth of God and of the soul—the nature and essence of both—which constitutes *the chief design of Masonic teaching*" (Preuss, 69).

A step further. By their own admissions Freemasonry is a religion. Mackey says this explicitly (*Ency.* 639, Preuss, p. 95). "I contend that Masonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical an eminently religious institution—that it is indebted *solely* to the *religious* element which it contains for its origin and continued existence, and that without this religious element it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and the good." Even more emphatic statements are made by Churchward (for instance, p. 213).

Against this will be urged the statement of Pike, "Morals and Dogma," 161, (Preuss, 59) that "Masonry is not a religion." The contradiction is only verbal. Pike by the word religion here referred to means the existing religious systems, such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Mohammedanism, etc. Now, according to him, all these, though having a basis of truth are overlaid with errors. Whereas Masonry has "preserved in their purity the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith" (Preuss p. 60), and hence is the only real, unsullied religious teacher. It is not a religion in the narrow sense of a specific sect, but it is a religion (the only true religion) in the sense of having retained pure and unsullied the primitive

revelation. In this verbal jugglery, of course, it is unsectarian. It leaves everyone to be a Catholic or Jew or Pagan. But it hopes and aims and designs to lead them gradually to the knowledge of that real religious truth which it alone possesses. It, therefore, cannot honestly be said to be unsectarian in spite of its amused toleration of every shade of religious belief, all the way from Catholicism to paganism. Every religion is in its eyes a corrupt version of the original truth which Masonry alone possesses and teaches. It is, indeed, a curious lack of logic which can claim to be the sole possessor of religious truth and at the same time claim to be nonsectarian.

Now, I have gone into all this not to argue the correctness or falsity of Freemasonry's claims to possessing such truth, etc. My object is to get the average Mason to understand from it why the Catholic Church necessarily forbids her children to join the craft. The claims of the Church and Freemasonry are hopelessly irreconcilable. The Church claims to be the visible representative of God on earth; hence, she claims to be the infallible guide in the teaching of faith and morals. How, then, in sheer logic can she allow her children to join in an organization which claims that it is the sole possessor of Divine truth in its original purity, that it can alone teach the truth about God, and the soul and morality and religious truth, etc? How can you reasonably expect the Church to allow her children to become members of an organization where, although their Catholic faith is tolerated along with that of a Protestant or Jew or Pagan, it is nevertheless regarded as a corruption of that original truth which Freemasonry alone possesses in its purity according to the claims of its highest interpreters. It would be just as logical to ask her to allow them to become members of a Protestant sect. It is asking her to give the lie to her own claims, to contradict her very nature to stultify her whole history and aim. Were Freemasonry merely a social and charitable fraternity, as the average American Mason incorrectly and innocently take it to be, she might overlook her historic conflicts in Europe with it and adopt a friendly attitude. But, as you see, the opposition is one of principle, of

inherent incompatibility. It is the hopeless opposition of two organizations, each claiming to be the guide in faith and morals. If you prefer Freemasonry, that is your own affair. But, in all reason and logic, you cannot at the same time embrace its contradiction.

IV

AMERICAN AND FRENCH FREEMASONRY

I have frequently had my Masonic friends, when upholding the religious aspect of their craft and its thereby friendly attitude towards Christianity and Catholicism, point with pride to the supposed break of American Freemasonry with the atheistical kind existing in France and most other Latin countries. And I am fully aware that their assertions have an apparent value, in view of the well-known fact that the American lodges did in a way break with the French because the latter in 1877 erased from their constitutions the paragraph declaring the existence of God and immortality of the soul the basis of Freemasonry. Also, I grant that the openly atheistic character of Latin Freemasonry has had much to do with emphasizing the Church's condemnation of Freemasonry in general.

But I would ask my Masonic friends to remember one or two things which somewhat modify the apparent seriousness of this rupture. In the first place, the existence of God is none too clearly and explicitly stated in the constitutions of American Grand Lodges themselves. Insistence is put upon a belief in the existence of the "Great Architect of the Universe." But this is so vague and symbolical that almost any kind of atheism may be covered by it. The truth of the matter seems to be that Masonry plays with the word "atheist" somewhat as, we saw, it plays with the word "religion." A man might be an "atheist" out and out, as ordinary people so understand the word, and yet not be an atheist from the Masonic point of view, and hence be admitted into a lodge. Pike (*Cath. Ency.*, 774) says "A man who has a higher conception of God than those about him, and who denies that their conception is God, is very likely to be called an atheist by men

who are really less believers in God than he." Giving atheism such an arbitrary and hopelessly vague meaning, therefore, robs the word "architect" of any definite meaning. And it would seem, boiled down, that the only difference on this point between American and French Masons is one of words. Your French Mason allows an atheist to enter his lodge. Your American does the same, but covers up the act with a verbal subterfuge. An American Grand Orator, Zabriskie (Arizona), on November 13, 1889, was, therefore, correct when he proclaimed that "individual members may believe in many Gods if their conscience and judgment so dictate" (Cath. Ency. Ib.). In other words, Freemasonry does not inquire into the religious views of its members, who can believe or disbelieve as they choose. A yet more conclusive evidence of this play upon words in this connection is supplied by a statement of Thevenot, Grand Secretary of the Grand Orient of France in 1878, that "French Masonry does not believe that there exist atheists in the absolute sense of the word" (Ib.), which is in perfect accord with the above statement of Pike. In plain English, therefore, this outward rupture between American and French Masonry concerns merely the continued use of a word which may mean anything or nothing. It does not indicate any fundamental difference of opinion concerning the fundamentals of Masonry. Fundamentally American Masonry is no more Theistic than its French brother.

This conclusion as to the absence of any real difference between American and French Masonry or of any real rupture between them is put beyond doubt by the *unity* of all Freemasons all over the world, despite occasional and unessential minor differences. I can do no better than quote from the learned and fair writer in the Catholic Encyclopedia.

Masonic authorities unanimously affirm that Freemasonry throughout the world is one, and that every regular Mason is entitled to be received in any regular lodge and to relief in time of distress. This unity is kept up by personal correspondence and intercourse, especially between the grand secretary

offices and international congresses. No less a supreme authority than Pike himself openly avowed this in 1885, when he wrote: "When the journal in London, which speaks of the Freemasonry of the Grand Lodge of England, deprecatingly protested that the English Freemasonry was innocent of the charges preferred by the Papal Bull against Freemasonry; when it declared that English Freemasonry had no opinions, political or religious, and that it did not in the least sympathize with the loose opinions and extravagant utterances of part of the Continental Freemasonry, it was very *justly* and very conclusively checkmated by the Roman organs with the reply: 'It is idle for you to protest. You are Freemasons, and you recognize them as Freemasons. You give them countenance, encouragement, and support, and you are jointly responsible with them, and cannot shirk that responsibility'" (Cath. Ency., 777). Churchward entitles Chapter X of his work "Universal Brotherhood of Freemasonry the only effective means for permanent peace throughout the world."

And so on. It is really idle for an American or any other Mason to deny that *Masonry* is one and the same essentially throughout the world. And hence it is that Freemasonry here is necessarily condemned by the Church no less than it is condemned in France. True! The average American *personally* is very seldom atheistical or anti-clerical, as is his French brother. But you cannot in reason expect the Church to lift her condemnation of the craft, as such here in America, so long as American Masonry is *united* with the atheistical brand in France or Italy. It is idle to deny this unity. It exists; it is real; it is a boast of Masonry; American Masonry is a part of world-wide Masonry, a brother of the French kind.

I write this not by way of harsh criticism, but merely to show you the justness and logic of the Church. You may have your opinion as to her general stand—opinions differ. But I cannot see how an American Freemason can logically claim an exemption from her condemnation.

V

**ATTITUDE OF FREEMASONRY TOWARDS
CATHOLICISM**

So much is always said about the hostile attitude of the Catholic Church against Freemasonry that it may help to clear matters if we inquire also into the attitude of Freemasonry towards Catholicism. It is necessary to do this in order to enlighten those well-meaning Masons for whom this writing is chiefly intended. And right here let me state that I am referring to the attitude of the leading Masonic writers and speakers and of the official publications of the craft. And I am sorry to say to my Masonic personal friends that Freemasonry, even here in America, measured by such a standard, is seen to be bitterly and irreconcilably hostile towards the Catholic Church. Really, I say this with deep regret, knowing what a shock it will be to those many Masons who have the highest regard for the Church, some of whom are married to Catholics and are rearing their children Catholics. But, painful as it is to say so, it is the truth that this hostility to the Church is practically universal among the leading men and official organs of Freemasonry, and it is a hostility which is bitter in the extreme.

Now, I could give innumerable quotations from the leading Masonic writers and Masonic magazines. But I will confine myself to two, because of the prominence of their sources and their frankness. The first is from the famous Albert Pike, who, both in America and Europe, is acclaimed by Masons as their greatest authority—"the Prophet of Freemasonry," the "Masonic Pope," to quote their own expressions of reverence for him. So that after he has spoken it is practically unnecessary to go to others for an opinion about Masonry. Well, then, listen to Pike's estimate of Catholicism versus Freemasonry. I quote from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (783) : "In a long letter of December 28, 1886, for instance, he conjures the Italian Grand Commander, Timoteo Riboldi, 33 * * * the intimate friend of Garibaldi, to do all in his power in order to unite Italian Masonry against the Vatican. He

writes: "The Papacy * * * has been for a thousand years the torturer and curse of humanity, the most shameless imposture, in its pretense to spiritual power of all ages. With its robes wet and reeking with the blood of half a million of human beings, with the grateful odor of roasted human flesh always in its nostrils, it is exulting over the prospect of renewed dominion. It has sent all over the world its anathemas against constitutional government and the right of men to freedom of thought and conscience." Again: "In the presence of this Cobra di Capello, this deadly, treacherous, murderous enemy, the most formidable power in the world, the unity of Italian Masonry is of absolute and supreme necessity," etc.

Note that herein Pike expresses the bitterest hatred of Catholicism along with ardent sympathy with Italian Masonry, which has always been the bitterest foe of the Pope. Now, then, after reading such words from the greatest of all Masons, how can any Mason still maintain that Masonry is not opposed to Catholicism? Against such an utterance from the "Masonic Pope," is it not downright childish to argue for the *tolerance* of Masonry in regard to the Catholic Church?

The second quotation is from "The American Freemason," the authoritative organ of the one million seven hundred thousand Blue Lodge members, quoted from "American Masonry and Catholic Education," by Rev. Michael Kenny, S.J., pp. 13-14: It says: "This magazine has never swerved from the position that between the Masonic fraternity and the Catholic Church there is an *antagonism* inherent to the nature of the organizations: the one seeking the broadest liberty of thought and the other striving to stifle all revolt against the self-constituted authority that would hold both mind and soul in thralldom. We have declared that there can be no peace, or even truce, between Freemasonry and the Catholic Church. They are opposing poles of thought," etc. Note that, in the opinion of a leading Masonic official organ, there is an opposition between Masonry and the Catholic Church which is not temporary or the result of

temporary occurrences, but an opposition that is constitutional, fundamental, necessary, hopeless.

Let these two quotations suffice. They are not isolated but typical. Pike finds his imitators in such popular Masonic works as Buck's "Genius of Freemasonry" and Stewart's "Symbolic Teachings." "The American Freemason" is echoed by all the other Masonic official magazines, such as the *New Age*, *Tyler Keystone*, and *Life and Action*. In the face, then, of such practically unanimous opposition to the Catholic Church openly expressed by the foremost American writers and speakers and official organs of Freemasonry is it not downright infantile to insist that Freemasonry does not oppose the Catholic Church, or, at the worst, that such opposition is restricted to the European, specifically French and Italian Masonry? No! "The American Freemason" is right; there is "an antagonism inherent to the nature of the organizations." The Catholic Church has always known this. How, then, account for the opposite view of so many American Masons?

Well! It all comes back to what I have already stated, namely, that the average American Mason is ignorant of the nature and aim of his craft. At least, there are many such. As said in the beginning, many Catholics, like myself, are personally acquainted with Masons who certainly do not entertain any such hostility towards the Church. Quite a number are married to Catholic women and are rearing their children Catholics. They are gentlemen, fair, and above reproach, and detest intolerance. To repeat, I heard a Mason, now a Catholic, expressly state that as a Mason he never heard of or found in Masonry the slightest hostility, and that he would like (if it were permitted) to have his son become a Mason. Likewise, I have heard my Masonic friends credit that exploded legend about Pope Pius IX once having been a Mason, apropos of which one of my dearest friends—a Mason—said to me that he never could understand why the Catholic Church objected to Masonry.

So, I repeat, the only explanation of this strange contradiction lies in the ignorance of real Masonry on the part of

many American Masons. They simply cannot read their official organs, let alone the heavier standard works of their great authors, and still retain their position. They must be ignorant. There is no other explanation possible of their attitude.

VI

A NOTE AS TO THE BIBLE

I have frequently heard Masons cite in proof of the piety and orthodox Christianity of their craft its well-known insistence upon the Bible as their rule and guide, their respect for it as shown by its open bearing in processions and dedications of new lodges, and so on. Just a word, then, about this. In this short space I cannot go to length in showing that this respect for the Bible at bottom means nothing to a Christian. Read Chapter XI of Preuss for a full discussion. All I can here do is to note a few salient points.

The main point to be ever kept in mind is that Masonry, though recognizing and tolerating all religions as containing some truth, nevertheless claims that all of them have distorted that truth which Masonry alone has preserved pure and unsullied. Therefore, the Bible is venerated as possessing some truth. But, so are all the holy books of all religions—the Mohammedan, Koran, the Vedas, the Lend Avesta. As Masonry here is amongst Christians, quite naturally it gives the prominence to the Bible. In Mohammedan or other countries it would give the same prominence to the Koran or Lend Avesta. It does not require of its initiates a belief in the authenticity of the Bible. It believes the Bible full of superstitious legends. It twists the Bible texts to suit its purposes. It regards it as useful only in so far as it symbolizes Masonic teaching.

Now, you will find all these statements repeated over and over again in Pike and Mackey and lesser lights. So that it is utterly untrue to say that Masonry reveres and believes in the Bible in that natural and time-honored way universal among Christians.

I commend this to the special attention of those many Protestant ministers who are Masons and who yet retain the old reverence of their fathers for the Sacred Scriptures. Again, let me repeat, they are Masons because they are ignorant of real Masonry. I say this, as well as all the preceding, not in a spirit of controversy, but in order to help these well-meaning Masons better understand why it is that a Catholic cannot be a Mason. I think it sufficient likewise to show why it is that a Christian of any denomination cannot be a Mason.

I leave the question here. I do not ask any Mason to take my word or that of any non-Masonic writer. I ask him merely to read his own standard authorities and official publications, either directly or with the help of the Catholic writers here quoted who quote from these same Masonic authorities. Every question can easily be verified. I confidently believe that any Mason who does so will agree with my contention that it is impossible for a Catholic to be a Mason. Something has been done if at least that much be made clear.

Freemasonry by a Freemason

FOR some thirty years I have been answering the perpetual question, "Why does the Catholic Church condemn Freemasonry?" the question being asked by Catholics no less than non-Catholics. The petitioners invariably bring up the same old time-worn objections to her attitude, which are that, allowing for the irreligious quality of Latin Freemasonry, Freemasonry in all other countries is, after all, not much more than a social and charitable organization of a non-sectarian character; that all of us have Freemason friends who are fine men and good Christians, etc., etc.

Now, being rather weary of answering, I think I will let a Freemason himself do it. Anyone who wishes to study thoroughly Freemasonry should consult the exhaustive works of its great exponents such as "Encyclopedia of Freemasonry," by Albert G. Mackey, or "Morals and Dogma of the Ancient

and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry," by Albert Pike. A rather complete and very fair critique of American Freemasonry, based upon a careful study of such standard works, is "A Study of American Freemasonry," by Arthur Preuss, which, though by a Catholic, has been commended by Freemasons themselves for its fairness and ability however much they may dissent from his conclusions. I advise any Catholic desirous of information to read it. (Published by the B. Herder Book Co., 17 S. Broadway, St. Louis, Mo.)

In this article I will confine myself strictly to the admissions of a Freemason, letting him do the stating of what Freemasonry is. With these statements of a Freemason in mind, the reader can then answer his own question as to why the Catholic Church should or should not approve Freemasonry. The book I quote from is "The Origin and Evolution of Freemasonry Connected With the Origin and Evolution of the Human Race," by Albert Churchward, M.D., M.R., C.P., F.G.S., P.M., P.Z., 30°, dedicated "To all my Brother Freemasons throughout the world who are seeking for the truth." My method will be to lay down some dozen statements which are admitted expressly by the author of this book. As he is a Mason and evidently a man of standing in his fraternity, I take his statements as correctly defining the aims and teachings of Freemasonry.

1° *Most Freemasons actually are ignorant of what real Freemasonry is.* The author says on page 223: "The majority of Freemasons know nothing really of what Freemasonry represents." A brief reflection on this amazing statement will doubtless explain why so many of your friends (fine men and good Christians) are Freemasons.

2° *Freemasonry is more than a mere social or charitable organization.* The author says, page 223, that while the majority "know nothing," regarding Freemasonry as a "charitable brotherhood," there are others, however, who are striving to learn and to know; their conscience tells them that there is something more in this great wonderful Brotherhood than charity and social club." The same warning is emphatically repeated on pages 209, 213, 219, 227, 228. In fact,

the author takes particular pains to disillusion the ignorant Masons of any such erroneous idea that Masonry is merely a social and charitable brotherhood.

3° *Freemasonry seeks to control politics and moral duties.* The author says: "If Masonry needed to be justified for imposing political as well as moral duties on its initiates it would be enough to point to the sad history of the world" (page 213). The "sad history" following refers chiefly to the iniquities of the Church of Rome and a praise of France for having "obliterated forever the Church dogmas" (p. 215). The point is that Freemasonry admits a political aim and imposes more obligations. This is a far step from a social club. The next statements will carry us yet further.

4° *Freemasonry teach ethics, religion, all about the origin of life and is the guide to spiritual life and knowledge.*

"It possesses the highest and truest ethics which the world has ever seen" (page 208).

"It is the old-time religion of the world, without dogmas or sects" (page 213, c.f. also page 219).

"The gnosis to obtain this everlasting spiritual life . . . has been carried down through the past ages by the so-called Speculative Freemasons" (page 50, c.f. page 231).

Regarding the origin of life and man's original ancestry, I admit that I cannot entirely make out the author's meaning, the first two chapters dealing apparently with the subject, being most unintelligible to me, however clear they may be to some high Mason. But, as far as I can understand, everything in the author's opinion originated through a sort of nebular conglomeration of atoms, which may or may not include a first Creator. The immateriality of the soul is likewise not clear, our author saying (p. 51) that "spirit consists of pure corpuscles," which, however, exist for eternity." This is rendered all the more confused by his assertion (p. 55) that "I know of no supernatural power." He is quite clear, nevertheless, that "the lowest type of human which was evolved from the anthropoid ape was the pygmy" (p. 66). I am not now discussing the correctness of such views. The point is that Masonry does offer an ethical system and a philosophy of

the origin of life and man and of the nature of the soul—quite a departure from a social or charitable organization.

5° *Freemasonry teaches the only pure religion.* “Our doctrines have originated and been handed down pure and unsullied . . . and none of the many creeds now in existence—the offshoots from the original—can be compared with the purity and high moral standard, pointing our duty to God and man and as a guide to our action, of the picture of our brotherhood” (page 219, c.f. 135, 213).

6° *Freemasonry is superior to all other “creeds now in existence.”* See preceding quotation. I particularly commend this statement to those many Protestant ministers who are Masons. Also the following:

7° *Freemasonry is the depositary of divine revelation.* “That divine revelation, which has passed through so many phases and is now preached as the Christian doctrines (without the dogmas) was first promulgated to these stellar cult people, and we Freemasons still continue it in its purest form” (page 135). Just who these stellar cult people were is of no moment. The point is that Freemasonry claims to be the depositary of Divine revelation; in fact, the only depositary in so far as it alone has preserved Divine revelation in its purity.

8° *Other religions are inferior in this respect.* See preceding quotation stating that Masonry continues divine revelation in its “purest form.”

9° *Christianity is a corruption of the original pure religion.* “The Christian doctrine which issued out of the ashes of the old Eschatolgy, first evolved by Copts, and the purity of which is spoiled by the recently introduced dogmas, has yet to evolve into a higher and purer Eschatology again” (page 177). Since Eschatology is that branch of theology which treats of the last things—death, the after life, immortality, etc.—we conclude that Christianity at present is preaching a corrupt doctrine regarding them.

10° *The philosophy and science and symbolism of Freemasonry have come down chiefly from the ancient pagan Egyptians, and primarily from the primitive pagan man.*

"The profound philosophy and science locked up in the symbolism of Freemasonry has come down to us from the Eschatology of ancient Egypt" (page 216).

"Our brotherhood, i. e., the so-called Speculative Masons, originated with the old Stellar Cult Her-Seshta priests, who instituted the seven primary Egyptian mysteries—called the Lesser Mysteries—and these were founded on their astro-mythology, the original mould being supplied by the Totemic mysteries of the more primitive man, the Hero-Cult Totemic people and their dawning mythology" (page 121. See also pages 218, 203, 212, 231, 119, 134).

11° Many of the ceremonies of Freemasonry originated with the primitive man who was the African negro pygmy himself descended from the anthropoid ape.

"It was in Africa that man was first born" (page 82).

"The first Homo evolved from an anthropoid ape in Africa (Ib.).

"The first man was the little pygmy" (p. 83).

"One of the implements we use in the lodge originated with these pygmies—the first that come into operation when we open the lodge, the gavel" (p. 86). This gavel was the "sacred pygmy symbol" (p. 87). "The Nilotic negroes knew that this ** was the sacred sign for the great one amongst the pygmies, and they converted it into two different forms. . . . These are still used in the same two forms by brothers of the 33°" (page 94). "Another ceremony, part of the initiation, called the Bora, is practiced by the Hero Cult Nilotic negroes, and is the original of our 3° . . . more faithfully portrayed in part of the 18°" (page 95).

12° Christianity is largely a corruption of this ancient pagan symbolism. For this the reader must piece together quite a number of quotations, somewhat like this:

"Horus of the Double Horizon was the most profound mystery, and the greatest of all the mysteries established by the old Urshi of Egypt" (page 150). Now, on page 167 we read: "Horus in the Eschatology was he who died and was buried and rose again in spirit at his second advent in human form. This time he was imaged in the likeness of his Father,

as the beloved and only begotten Son of God, who manifested as the fulfiller of His Word, and the doer of His will. In the Eschatology, Ra became the great god in spirit, as the Holy Spirit Father. The two types in this way were deposited and made permanent in Horus, the child of twelve years, and Anset Horus, the man of thirty years."

Now, either I do not know the meaning of words, or these words mean that, in the theology of Freemasonry, the Trinity and Incarnation are nothing more than a corruption or variation of an ancient pagan Egyptian myth. This conclusion is put beyond doubt by other statements here and there. For instance, on page 195 we are told "how the old Egyptian sign language was brought on and converted into Christian symbolism. Again, "when Europe was converted to Christianity it was by making use of the same symbols that were hallowed in the previous cults" (page 191). For instance, "Horus or Jesus as Ichthus, the fish," or "in another type of the pictures found in the catacombs the 'Good Shepherd' is accompanied by both the lamb and the ram, which are equivalent to the dual types of Horus of the Equinox in Aries" (page 191). Likewise the Christian cross is a mutilation of one of these ancient symbols (page 190), also the "Risen Christ" page (196).

13° *The Bible contains drivelling foolishness.* "In no land or literature has the mythical mode of representation been perverted and reduced to drivelling foolishness more fatally than in some of the Hebrew legends, such as that of Jonah and the great fish" (page 157). The reader might also note how some of the teachings of St. Paul are referred to as a more or less distorted reproduction of an ancient Nilotic negro myth (page 184). I particularly recommend this point to Protestant Ministers who are Masons.

14° *Masonry is opposed to Catholicism.* Space will not permit me to quote the many passages proving beyond doubt this fact. The reader can consult pages 73, 74, 203, 214-217 in particular. In fact, this hostility runs pretty much all through the book. The point, however, which the reader

should keep in mind is that this hostility does not spring (except here and there) from any accidental resentment against the Church because of her opposition to Freemasonry, but from a settled conviction on the part of the author that there is an irreconcilable opposition of nature between Freemasonry and Catholicism; that the two are radically, fundamentally and hopelessly irreconcilable, because of their diametrically contradictory philosophy of life and theology. There is not a single hint in the book that this opposition can eventually be overcome, no more than you can reconcile truth with error.

I leave the answer there as it stands. Tempting as it is to indulge in comment upon these admissions of a Freemason, I refrain because I want the reader to keep clear in his head just one thing, namely, the reasons why the Catholic Church will not allow her children to be Freemasons. She has other reasons, true, of her own. But I refrain also from mentioning them. Because, here, I aim at allowing a Freemason himself to expound these reasons. So then, once and for all, you have a Freemason's own words by which you can judge why the church opposes his organization. Remember that, namely, the above are the descriptions by a Freemason of Freemasonry. I am not even discussing the truth or falsity or morality of the philosophy and theology of Freemasonry. Still less am I inspired by any spirit of vindictiveness, inasmuch as I myself also have some very good friends who are Freemasons, men for whom I have the highest respect. All I do is to let a Freemason himself tell you what, in his judgment, Freemasonry is; what it teaches, what are its aims, etc. Purely objective. I am content to leave you to form your own judgment, based upon his own words, as to the reasonableness of the opposition of the Catholic Church to Freemasonry. As for myself, I can only say that I thoroughly agree with the author that there is an irreconcilable opposition between the two, however much I may regret it, and however much I may personally admire and have sincere friendship with many individual Freemasons. How any man, bearing in mind the above statements of a Mason, can continue to ask

why the Church condemns Freemasonry, is a state of mind which I cannot fathom. Such a man needs to go to an alienist for treatment.

I will add that the above conclusion of the author are in full accord with the conclusions of both Mackey and Pike. Hence, they are not the views of a mild sort of individual Mason, but are the views accepted by the highest authorities among Masons. If the average Mason is ignorant of them, as I believe he is, that is only just another proof that the Catholic Church really knows more about Masonry than does the average Mason.

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